

# The C E A CRITIC

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## Nobody Ever Told Him!

There has been much throwing around of brains and loud lamentation because ninety-seven per-cent of all English Ph.D's go into teaching. Whether or not the situation is unfortunate, there is no gainsaying the facts of the matter — a large percentage ARE engaged in perpetuating the race of English teachers.

Instead of bemoaning an obvious trend, would it not be more pertinent to ask — How can we assist this large majority to be an ornament rather than an impediment? How can we be reasonably sure that they are assisting in propping up a worthy profession, instead of knocking the props from under the whole business?

It has been the general consensus that it takes about two years for the neophyte, fresh

from the graduate school, to realize that he is confronting undergraduates, and then another year or so to find out what to do about it. Sometimes he never finds out; in which case he often becomes a graduate teacher and keeps the vicious circle intact. Even if he has taught a few composition classes to pay for his "free" tuition, he has paid little attention to his menial task. And it really isn't his fault. Nobody ever told him anything, and he never had a chance to experiment. Nobody ever told him that the chances were eight out of ten that he wouldn't do enough research that could be turned into scholarly articles to amount to anything. Nobody ever told him that good colleges would want him primarily to impress the minds of callow youth and not those of his colleagues in General Topics VIII of the M.L.

A. Nobody ever told him how important it is to have a fresh and definite plan when he enters the classroom, and nobody, Oh nobody, ever told him he ought to cultivate a clear enunciation, a voice which would carry pleasantly to the back of the room, and a classroom manner that was free of, at least, the most exasperating mannerisms. Nobody ever told him early enough that a pleasant outgoing personality, and a liking for youngsters was basic. Nobody ever told him, and yet, they sent him out to teach!

Now, I am not suggesting that we let the Educators step in — nothing, from my point of view, could be much more disastrous. What I do urge is that our Graduate Students be made to understand these things as thoroughly as they understand the evolution of the pentameter line. This might be done in the Graduate Clubs that meet on so many University campuses, in conjunction with the work done in regular Seminar courses. There is not much reason for adding another course — (in teaching) — who knows enough about it to talk pointedly of teaching for thirty hours anyhow? Instead of devoting all the Club's meetings to scholarly papers, there ought to be some time devoted to discussing the problems of teaching, to turning the mind toward the undergraduate recipient of this colossal knowledge. In the seminars, the instructor should insist upon clarity of ideas and appropriate presentation. At that point, the students should be told frankly of their defects as speakers, and guided into proper courses to cure these defects. If the student does assist in some courses, he ought to be observed and criticized, fairly but severely. And finally, if he does not measure up, he ought to be advised to join that small percentage who earn their living by other work.

If the teaching of English is worth while, or if it can be made worth while, we are not going to help it any by ignoring the facts of life, or by putting up defense mechanisms because they are unpleasant. We must continue to be certain that the Graduate Student knows his subject-matter, but we must be doubly sure that he can "put it across". We must be satisfied that somebody told him!

Thomas F. Marshall,  
Western Maryland College

## MAMMOUTH

English departments may well consider the implications of a Program in Composition and Literature in operation at the recently organized Mammouth Cave College, which has been called "The College of the Atomic Age". While the college is not yet ready to make a formal announcement, its determination to develop the first really complete program in Composition and Literature challenges the attention of all colleges in this country, and particularly all Arts Colleges. In its Announcement, just issued, there is this statement:

"Mammouth Cave College feels that the most valuable tool a graduate can have is the ability to use his language fluently, precisely, and forcefully. While developing skill in the use of this tool, the student will also learn to analyze himself and his environment, and this experience will be invaluable to him in his personality development. Moreover, the college also feels that the modern world is in a moral vacuum. It must find new values, and it is most likely to find these values in great works of the humane tradition of Western Culture. The college is dedicated to implementing an effective program in all these respects."

Full details are not yet available, but enough is known to make a most interesting preliminary report of what is being done by this new college, unhampered by tradition. First, Mammouth has agreed that the instructor is the heart of any program, and that, therefore, it is essential to have a good staff, and not to overload it with theme reading, or administrative work, or committee assignments. To attract the right sort of instructors, a basic minimum salary of \$7500 was decided on. Every teacher must be a Ph. D. from a high class institution, but in addition, he must have earned his living as a writer or editor or both, and must have published novels or plays or poetry, as well as several books of scholarship and some serious literary criticism. Moreover, he must have had experience as a public lecturer. And it is required that after his appointment he continue to give five public

(Continued on Page 5)

## ANNUAL MEETING

Date: December 27, 1948. Place: Columbia University  
(Not December 28, as previously announced)

10:45 A. M. Greetings: Oscar James Campbell, Columbia University

### Program

10:00 A. M. Registration (Harkness Theatre).

11:00 A. M. Shakespeare For The Undergraduates (Harkness Theatre).

Main Speaker: G. Ian Duthie, McGill University.

Chairman and Leader of Discussion: Oscar James Campbell

12:30 P. M. Luncheon (Men's Faculty Club)

Speaker: Glenway Wescott, A Writer's View Of Teaching Literature

Chairman and Leader of Discussion: President Theodore Spencer, Harvard University

2:00 P. M. The Ph. D. — Past, Present, and Future (Harkness Theatre. A Panel Discussion. Speakers: Sanford Meech, Syracuse University; Emery Neff, Columbia University; Theodore Spencer, Harvard University; W. L. Werner, Pennsylvania State College.

The price of the luncheon will be \$2.50. Reservations should be addressed to the Treasurer, Professor William A. Owens, Columbia University, New York 27, New York.

All college teachers of English are welcome at the Association's meetings, whether they are members of the Association or not.

Enjoy the C.E.A. Annual Meeting! Enjoy an extra night in New York.

The Association's Appointment Bureau will be open at the Hotel Pennsylvania, New York, December 28, 29, 30, 1948.

## THE CEA CRITIC

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Membership in the College English  
Association \$2.00 a year, of which \$1.50  
is for subscription of the CEA CRITIC.  
Subscription for Libraries \$1.50.  
Application for entry as Second Class  
matter at Mineola, N. Y., is pending.

## Terrible Stuff

"What terrible stuff passes for English in Ph. D. dissertations, monographs, and articles in the historical reviews. . . There is no fundamental cure for this except better teaching of English in our schools and by all teachers (emphasis supplied), whatever their other subjects. . . The American university teacher who gives honor grades to students who have not yet learned to write English, for industrious compilations of facts or feats of memory, is wanting in professional pride or competency. . . Do not fall into the fallacy of supposing that facts speak for themselves. Most of the facts that you excavate from the archives, like all relics of past human activity, are dumb things; it is for you to make them speak by proper selection, arrangement and emphasis. . .

"Keep the reader constantly in mind. You are not writing history for yourself or for the professors who (you may imagine) know more about it than you do. Assume that you are writing for intelligent people

who know nothing about your particular subject but whom you wish to convince of its interest and significance. I once asked the late Senator Beveridge why his life of John Marshall, despite its great length and scholarly apparatus, was so popular. He replied, "The trouble with you professors of history is that you write for each other. I write for people almost completely ignorant of American history, as I was when I began my research. . ."

Samuel Eliot Morison, "An Appeal to Young Historians", quoted in *Pleasures of Publishing*, XV, 12, 6-28-48.

"Poetry and  
General Education"

The CHAP BOOK'S latest essay, by President Chalmers of Kenyon, was as vigorous and provocative a piece as I have read in some time. Possibly to stimulate further discussion, I should like to offer these comments about "Poetry and General Education."

Mr. Chalmers did a first-rate job of exposing at least one of general education's inane premises, that it should be a study of what constitutes the best society. The entire article is justified by the delightful precision of his dart throwing at that somewhat dazzling target. Such a game takes good eyesight.

But Mr. Chalmers, feeling a creative impulse come suddenly over him, went ahead to try the impossible — certainly legitimate sport, if you remember that it is only sport — that is, to define poetry in terms other than those of poetry itself. He was surprisingly successful, in a very relative sense. But I wonder if he didn't have a feeling of frustration amounting almost to physical pain — the kind of feeling that trying the impossible always leaves you with? At least, when you forget it's only sport? The few almost satisfying definitions of what poetry is have been written in poetry by poets—and even the best of them have failed when they tried to do the job in dialectic, tutored by reason alone.

Surely many who read the article felt that perhaps Mr. Chalmers had confused what the teacher CAN do with it would be nice if the teacher COULD do. It would be pleasant if we could teach what poetry is, but poets wonder all their lives about how to say what it is, if they ever get far enough away from it to be academic about it. The more important thing is to discover — which today generally

means to recover — the impact of poetry. It is in the process of preparing to receive that impact that we study what Mr. Chalmers calls the elements: metaphor, over-tone, innuendo, lyric, and story. No matter how much we study them we will not learn what poetry is. We will perhaps establish in ourselves and in our students that special receptivity of all the faculties—senses, mind, and imagination — which must come before the poem or any work of art stands a chance of being heard "as in itself it really is."

"Poetry and General Education" is at its very best in the argument that the focal point of general education should be what we ordinarily call literature, what Mr. Chalmers calls poetry—and with justice. But not because we can know "what poetry in its broad sense is and how to think with it," but because the experience of poetry is a personal one which is self-revealing.

Robert Stockwell,  
Graduate Student  
University of Virginia

The English Major  
Hits the Jack-Pot

Business and the professions look with favor on an English major as preparation for employment, according to the two guest speakers at the 35th College Conference on English in the Central Atlantic States.

Speaking in the Waverly Auditorium of New York University, October 23, Dean Russell D. Niles of the New York University School of Law, and Dexter M. Keezer, director of the department of economics of the McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, agreed that the ability to write clearly, to read with high comprehension, and to understand the wide varieties of human experience met in literature are among the surest guarantees of success in law and industry.

This, of course, was just what the English teachers wanted to hear. Dean Niles stressed the traditionally high literary attainments of English barristers since the days of *Gorboduc*, when lawyers wrote dramas. He called the illustrious roll of Bacon, Beaumont, Wycherly, Sheridan, Goldsmith, Burke, Dickens, Thackeray, and other men of letters who had lived in the Inns of Court. This he called the sentimental reason for lawyers' liking good English.

But he followed it with the practical reason that a lawyer gives most of his time to writing or to reading cases on which he must base judgment. The ideal major for a law student,

he said, is made up of advanced composition, literature, and history, in any proportion. Though law schools draw most heavily on social science majors, he found this major less desirable along with majors in science or mathematics, which give students "neat, orderly minds" but do not teach them to make judgments of quality nor to deal with human nature, which is often illogical. Not psychology, but fiction, he said, is the great storehouse of human knowledge.

Mr. Keezer had the evidence of 41 out of 50 replies to a questionnaire sent to personnel directors of large industries employing a total of 750,000 people. All employers took his questions seriously, and although their responses will be reported in detail elsewhere, the general conclusion was that the English major has as good a chance as any other major of success in business. He is as likely to land near the top of the heap as any, and will be especially useful in public relations, advertising, sales, personnel, administrative, and correspondence work. If employers favor those who have majored in economics, engineering, or business administration, that is often only because the student's choice of such a major indicated his interest in business.

The conference was ably presided over by Professor Elizabeth F. Boyd of the New Jersey College for Women, who invited Professor J. Milton French of Rutgers University to speak of his independent investigation of the practical value of English in the professions. He found that even medical deans like English majors for students, provided that they have also the minimum courses in biology, organic chemistry, and other prerequisites for medical study.

Doctors lament the impression that has got abroad that a man must major in science in order to study and practice medicine, for doctors, too, need a wide knowledge of human nature.

Possibly what some of the audience did not like to hear was criticism of those teachers who fail to teach students how to write under pretext of teaching them to think. Technique may be drudgery, but it is necessary.

Officers elected for next year's conference are Henry Wise Cornell, president; Miss Mildred Willsey, Wilson College, vice-president, and Donald J. McGinn, Rutgers, secretary-treasurer. Robert A. Pratt, Queens College, was chairman of the nominating committee.

J. G. E.



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## I'VE BEEN READING

Members are invited to contribute reviews of books, old or new, which they wish to call to the attention of other English teachers. Professor J. Gordon Eaker, the Assistant Editor, is in charge of I'VE BEEN READING. He is Head, Department of English, Jersey City Junior College, Jersey City, N. J.

Comments on reviews will be welcomed.

Henry James, *The Art of Fiction and other essays*, with an introduction by Morris Roberts, Oxford University Press, 240 pp. \$3.75.

James's critical essays are not easy to read, but this collection, which sets forth his general attitude toward realism in the novel, gives one his valuable estimates of men he had met personally.

Two essays are on Turgeneff, whom James knew in Paris as simple, modest, with not a particle of vanity and no prejudice. Flaubert felt in his vocation almost nothing but the difficulty. *Madame Bovary* deals not in the least with things exalted or refined, yet the work is a classic because it is ideally done. Zola made the novel carry everything, but lacked taste. His novels, methodically "got up," are the most extraordinary imitation of observation that we possess. James reports a conversation in which Zola, planning *Les Trois Villes*, named one of the cities as Rome, though his knowledge of Italy consisted of a few days spent at Genoa. James thought of his own saturations of Rome—a history of long years and how the effect on him had been but to make the subject too august. Yet Zola's book appeared the next year!

J. G. E.

Alexander Cowie, *The Rise of the American Novel*, American Book Company, 877 pp., \$5.00.

This thorough piece of historical criticism, undoubtedly to become the Bible in its field, surprises one at its size, but each minor novelist soon falls into his place in the development of the distinctly American novel. The early chapters breathe American ideals, frontier psychology, and social history. The first major author, Cooper, becomes human, understandable, and interesting under Professor Cowie's hands; and, in addition, one finds clear summaries of the novels, scholarship, and criticism of such figures as Charles Brockden

Brown, James Kirke Paulding, and William Gilmore Simms.

The chapter on Hawthorne, though short, is satisfying and gives a fair estimate of his strengths and weaknesses. Mark Twain is presented at length, with interesting summaries of all his novels, followed by a full analysis of his social philosophy, his reading limitations, his religion, his moods of pessimism, and his colloquial style. Major chapters treat Melville, Howells, and James; others cover the domestic sentimentalists, the Civil War writers, and local color and regional fiction.

The final value of the work is fully as much critical as historical.

J. G. E.

Henry David Thoreau by Joseph Wood Krutch, 287 pp. and index (New York: William Sloane Associates, \$3.50).

This first book in the publishers' series of *American Men of Letters* is critical and biographical; some twenty more are promised for publication. In no sense will these books rival the American Book Company's *American Writers Series*, for they are aimed at a popular audience and intend to re-evaluate the contribution which the writers made to the contemporary world. The projected series covers a wider range, too, and proposes to include Hart Crane and Scott Fitzgerald, as well as Jonathan Edwards, Jefferson, Lincoln, and other familiar figures.

Students and scholars in American Literature are apt to feel in Mr. Krutch's book the weight of the commonplace, for most of the effort has gone toward exposition and very little toward new approaches. The book has the added virtue of condensing much recent criticism.

The indebtedness of Thoreau to Emerson and Thoreau's later reasons for dissatisfaction with Emerson are very well handled. The relationship and personalities of the Transcendental Group to each other is also clear, though brief.

One feels that this is a workman-like popular life of Thoreau certainly, but an assignment rather than a labor of love.

H. L. Varley,  
University of Massachusetts,  
Amherst, Mass.

William F. Brooks, *Radio News Writing*, McGraw Hill, \$2.75.

Carl Warren, *Radio News Writing and Editing*, Harpers, \$4.00.

Every radio station in the country now has frequent five-

minute or fifteen-minute news reports, and a special kind of writing ability is called for by them. Colleges are therefore adding work in radio journalism. These two books, one by the vice president in charge of news and international relations, National Broadcasting Company, and the other by the Broadcast Editor, New York Daily News, will serve well as textbooks in such courses.

J. G. E.

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To receive Second Class Mailings, that he was all-powerful, ing privileges, a publication must be subscribed for specifically, and not merely received as part of the presumed benefits of paying dues to an Association which issues the publication. It will be necessary, therefore, at the Annual Meeting on December 28, 1948, for the Association to pass the following resolution and make it a part of the by-laws: "Resolved, that a copy of each issue of 'The C E A CRITIC' shall be sent to each member of the College English Association, and that each member shall pay of his annual membership dues of \$2.00, \$1.50 as a year's subscription to 'The C E A CRITIC'."

## FROST

Dear Mr. Editor:

I hope you can find room in your paper for an interpretation of Robert Frost's poem, "The Pasture." I feel sure that all of your readers will remember this poem; yet a brief summary may be in order—I would quote the poem here, but Henry Holt and Company demand \$10.00 for that privilege.

The poem has only two stanzas—four lines each. In the first stanza the speaker says that he is going out for a short time to clear the pasture spring, and he suggests that the person spoken to should go along. In the second stanza the speaker has changed his mind; he is going out to bring in a little calf. He repeats the invitation.

To most readers this poem has a subtle, haunting beauty. But what does it mean? What it says? And no more? Or this a part which the poet—who has called himself a Synecdochist—seeks to suggest a whole train of ideas? If so, what is that whole? Mr. Lawrence Thompson, in *Fire and Ice*, page 128, says that this is a love poem, that here we have a rustic lover diffidently inviting his sweetheart to take a walk with him.

Mr. Thompson has had such unusual opportunities to get first-hand information for his book that one hesitates to question his opinions. However, a few facts here may be relevant. When "The Pasture" first appeared in a book, it was used as the frontispiece in *North of Boston*, 1914. It was not listed in the Table of Contents of that volume. It appeared again, and again in first place, in *Selected Poems*, 1923. Also it was given first place in *Collected Poems*, 1939; and again

in each of these volumes it was not listed in the Table of Contents. It should be noted here, moreover, that in each edition of the *Collected Poems*—including the recent Modern Library edition—the poems from *A Boy's Will*, 1913, precede the ones from *North of Boston*. Yet this poem was taken out of its context to be first in these books. In 1943, this poem appeared again, and again in first place, in *Come In, and Other Poems*. In this volume it bore the title, "An Invitation." Even Mr. Louis Untermeyer, in his *Modern American Poetry*, 1932, places this poem at the head of his selections from Robert Frost.

It is, I hope, not unfair to point out that the two stanzas do not agree as to the reason for "going out." So if this is merely the sort of invitation that Mr. Lawrence Thompson suggests, why would not the lover make up his mind as to which of the two projects he really intended? Also, and this is the important question, if the poem carries merely that sort of invitation, why has the poet chosen it for reprinting so often, and with such emphasis of position?

It seems to me that a more reasonable interpretation would be that the poet, conscious that his books are recorded journeys of his spirit through the lives of the many men and women of his poems, is in "The Pasture" inviting the readers of his books to make these journeys with him. If that is what the poem means by "You come too," then "cleaning the pasture spring" and "fetching the little calf" are not disjointed or contradictory expressions of intention, but beautiful and fitting—though homely—symbols of the many tender experiences that so often inspire the poems of Robert Frost.

William S. Long,  
Radford College

GOOD READING: A Guide to the World's Best Books, was issued in a hard-cover format on November 15 by Hendick House-Farrar Strauss.

William M. Oman, manager of the college department at Oxford University Press since 1941, has been elected a vice-president of the Press.

## "MUSE'S MOTHER-IN-LAW"

As a footnote to Professor Brooks' article, "The Muse's Mother-in-Law", let me add that several of my friends dropped the field of English literature in the middle of doctoral studies and regretfully transferred to new

fields because their programs required research on material of little intrinsic worth. Every year eager graduate students visit the libraries of master's theses and doctoral dissertations, discover that nobody including the faculty ever reads these papers, and then discard plans to continue advanced work in English. There is a real and present challenge to graduate departments in English to direct work on Professor Spiller's "nature of the creative process" or Professor Brooks' "big problems" dealing with the center of literature and the role of the artist.

Donald Urner,

University of New Hampshire.

Reports of the recent meetings of the Pennsylvania C.E.A. and the California C.E.A. will appear in an early issue.

## "THEME" SONG

Huge piles of papers on the floor  
From Freshman pens they freely pour;

They fill the room up to the door;  
They flood into the corridor  
And down the stairs to Singapore,

We'll board a ship, the Pinafore,  
With paper sail and paper oar  
Then, onward, onward, to the shore.

We'll climb the snowy piles galore;

Unknown regions we'll explore  
Until our beards have turned to hoar

Or frozen our posterior.  
Many miles are yet in store  
To glacial summits we'll upsoar  
With strange device, "Excelsior!"

Then, onward, onward, up the tor.

A paper flag, a little gore  
And soon we have a semaphore;

We're corporals in the signal corps;

For like a charging minotaur  
Or prehistoric dinosaur

These make us feel inferior;

We must prepare for total war;  
But, ever, onward to the fore.

## Envoy

Ye pagan gods of hallowed lore  
Be praise to Allah, Jove and Thor  
Gods save us we to you implore.  
Take all away and bring no more.

Robert N. Yetter

University of Arkansas

## MERTON

Dear Mr. Editor:

The CEA Critic may be interested in the following item which I came upon recently in my reading:

"Now if people are going to write, they must first of all have something to write about, and if a man starts out to teach English composition, he implicitly obliges himself to teach the students how to get up enough interest in things to write about them. But it is also impossible for people to learn to write unless they also read. And so a course in composition, if it is not accompanied somewhere along the line by a course in literature, should also take a little time to teach people how to read, or at least how to get interested in a book.

—Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1948, p. 274.

Sincerely yours,

Rev. Arthur MacGillivray, S.J.  
Fairfield University

P.S. I think that Paul Landis' "The Survival-Quotient in Teaching Literature" (*Chap Book*, March, 1948) and Gordon Keith Chalmers' "Poetry and General Education" (*Chap Book*, September 1948) should be in the hands of every teacher of literature in America.

## A NOTE ON STYLE

(for

Beginning Graduate Students)

Aristotle, in the *Poetics*, says there is a place for the decorative. Two sentences from the Lane Cooper version read: "Elaborate Diction is to be used only when the action pauses, and no purposes and arguments of the agents are to be displayed. Conversely, where the purposes and reasonings of the agents need to be revealed, a too ornate Diction will obscure them." Nobody but a heady student will ignore the second sentence or take the first one as a license to pile on the rhetoric. Rather, the student will take Aristotle's sharp observation for its main value to a beginner, which is its usefulness in detecting thin substance, sleazy workmanship.

Whoever indulges himself



Leonard S. Brown  
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University of Maryland

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Whoever indulges himself often in rhetoric, as often betrays himself. A student may have got acceptance, or even praise, for his rhetoric from a competent instructor. But the competent instructor did not give the acceptance or the praise because he knew no better. He gave it because he expected no better.

The decorative, the rhetorical, assumes many forms. Yet it has, in a beginner's work, one basic form, that of the writer gritting his teeth at the reader. It is an attempt to force an effect without furnishing the substance that would make the effect both possible and legitimate. If, however, the writer realizes the material is thin and lays on with the decorative consciously, there is hope. The student for whom there is hope in graduate school has, in writing, a problem similar to one he had when he began undergraduate school. As an undergraduate he learned not to count for his effects on mechanical devices. He learned to avoid exclamation points, dots, and dashes, asterisks, underlinings. He learned to delete his very's and suddenly's and loom's, the "arty", and all the bad etcetera of such caperings. As a graduate student, he must learn a similar lesson about rhetoric.

Whether the decorative runs to the trite, the stilted, the incongruous, the sentimental, or the melodramatic, the lesson about rhetoric is the same. The decorative covers bare spots that should not be covered. It covers bare spots that should be cut out. "The vast and magnificent", or something like it, begins many an unrevised paper. Suppose it is "the vast and magnificent achievement of Katherine Mansfield", as in a recently offered master's thesis. Come now, is it vast? If it is magnificent, furthermore, do not rush so upon the stage, shouting re-soundings and tossing tinsel. Allow us our breath, at the first, by a quiet heart, with a kettle on the hob, grandame at her mending in her gray wrapper. Beat your wings after you have worked at us for a while and when, therefore, the fit is on us. It is true that good scholars and critics may write eloquently when introducing or, more often, when summarizing material that substantiates the eloquence. But the novice who strives for effect through the decorative, without a foundation of substantial, factual development, bumps along on the bare spots and ends up in melodrama and anticlimax.

To write a clear, simple, straightforward, effective style, a student needs to learn the

uses of discipline, that is, of revision. By practice, by revision, a student learns not to saw the air too much. Practice almost never makes perfect. But practice almost always makes more perfect. If the beginning graduate student will exercise himself inwardly, he may free his style from the lendings of literary buffoonery. Exercise, which is practice in intellectual and emotional discipline, will help the average student and the excellent. It may be, a student can hardly do better than honor Ben Jonson's injunction in *Timber*: "For a man to write well, there are required three necessities: to read the best authors, observe the best speakers, and much exercise of his own style".

C. C. Hamilton  
Michigan State College

## MAMMOUTH—

(Continued from Page 1)

lectures a year, in addition to producing one paper for M.L.A. or the English Institute, and something creative once in five years. Teachers who can meet these requirements, it is felt, will make a well-trained and well-rounded staff.

English classes at Mammouth Cave College have a maximum enrollment of twenty, with no instructor carrying more than forty composition students, or more than three classes (a "nine hour load"). Every instructor is supposed to hold a fifteen minute conference with each of his students at least once in two weeks. In addition, there is an English instructor assigned as advisor to every class in the college. History, Forge & Shop Practice, Physical Ed., et al. The advisor goes over all papers written for the class, and holds both the instructor and the students to a high level of written and oral expression. Mammouth recognizes that "composition should be taught in all classes" throughout a student's college course, but that few teachers except English teachers really know how to do a good job. In evaluating teaching time, three "Advisories" are counted as one regular section.

To keep everyone from being burdened with too much administration, the department chairmanship rotates every three weeks.

As for work in the English department, each student is required to take English all the time he is in college. There are no exemptions. Able students who wish to may be put into advanced sections of their classes, but it is felt that the opportunities for development in English classes are so great that no stu-

dent should be deprived of them. Every effort is made to see that normal sections are Democratically well balanced with a few able students, a good many average students, and even a few inferior students who are specially admitted for this purpose. And in planning the courses, it is recognized that students attending Mammouth have special problems which the college must take into account. For example, almost all entering freshmen are completely illiterate, and as a result it is necessary to begin with them practically at the beginning. The first semester's work, therefore, is a rigid course in grammar. Students who fail it must repeat it, because without this foundation it is impossible for them to understand the structure of their language and hence to use it effectively. The second semester course is an integrated combination of Aristotelian Logic and General Semantics (texts: Aristotle's *Organon* and Korzybski's *Science and Sanity*.) This course is called "The Modern Trivium". Since Mammouth believes effective writing to be merely a verbalization of clear thinking, it requires that all students learn to think right.

During their freshman year, students write one short paper (1000 words) a week. This paper must be handed in on time, and instructors are required to read all papers and return them corrected the day after they are turned in. It must be admitted that this requirement puts a strain on the staff, since classes at Mammouth meet every day in order to cover the work that is considered absolutely essential. (Less essential work is included in an Outside Reading Program, which will be mentioned later.) In planning the theme work for his classes, each teacher is allowed complete freedom, but most of the staff feels that proper motivation is of the highest importance. Unless the student can be needled into thinking he actually has something to say, his writing is largely a meaningless formal exercise. But some instructors feel that this process of artificial insemination is a waste of time. They merely write a few topics on the board and require that students produce a theme on one of them by a specified date. Others develop elaborate plans for getting students to probe their inner experiences and to use their themes as a method for developing their personalities. Still a third group feels that the greatest stimulation comes from reading and the discussion of reading. This group holds that if what a student reads has no immediate meaning for him in terms of his own environment.

it is largely meaningless. A fourth group holds vigorously that writing "themes" is an utterly unreal situation. No one in "life" writes a theme; people write letters, or reports, or stories, or magazine articles, but never "themes". This group of instructors motivates writing on the basis of real life situations. A few instructors subscribe to none of these theories, but simply "teach composition", using whatever "approach" they wish, and frequently a combination of several. It is too early yet for conclusive results, but since all instructors continue to express serious dissatisfactions with student writing, it is probable that all methods are equally ineffective. Whatever the method of motivation, the freshman course is carefully planned so that the writing and the study of grammar and logic are closely integrated.

In the second year, the emphasis is shifted to Usage. During the first term, students conduct an exhaustive and integrated comparative analysis of Perin's *Writer's Guide* and Woolley's *Handbook* as a way of learning the difference between descriptive standards and prescriptive standards. In the second term, students subscribe to the *New Yorker*, the *Daily News*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and the *Atlantic* so that they may develop inductively a sense of what constitutes an acceptable level of contemporary Usage and Style. (They are assigned *The American Language*, complete with supplements, as collateral reading.) As a basis for comparison, they also study such classic authors as Addison, Matthew Arnold, and Cardinal Newman. During this year the length of the weekly themes is increased to 1500 words, and students are encouraged to be more thoughtful and critical, and less reportorial and descriptive. In this connection, there has been some discussion of whether to organize composition work on the old rhetorical basis, with separate study of the principles of Description, Narration, Exposition, and Argumentation. Since there was no possibility of agreement on this matter, it was decided to permit those instructors who felt such an arrangement would be desirable to plan a program and offer it experimentally. The course will be given for the first time next fall.

In the last two years, the composition work is less formal, except for one long research paper (10,000 words) each term. These papers give students excellent practice in organization and penmanship, but their primary purpose is thorough training in literary use of the library and in creative annotation and bibliogra-

phy. Frequently these papers are closely integrated with the work of other departments. In their original papers during the junior and senior years, students are encouraged to follow their own interests, and if possible, to do creative writing. To encourage the broadest possible development, the following minimum requirements have been set up: 1 long critical essay, 1 fully documented autobiography or biography, 1 serious non-fictional study, 2 short stories, 1 novel, a group of lyric poems including ten sonnets, and a short epic poem. The weekly stint for each student during his last two years is expected to average about 5000 words. Seniors frequently earn as much as \$800 a term from their writing.

In addition to the four year program in Composition, Mammouth has a four year Program in Literature which is closely integrated throughout with the Composition. In the first term, the reading is largely from contemporary authors, and is chosen primarily to interest the students and to obliterate the dim and bilious view of literature which they universally develop in high school. Books recently read with success include: *Ulysses*, *The Remembrance of Things Past*, *U. S. A.*, and *The G-String Murder Case*. In the second term, the same motivation is followed, but students advance from reading whole books to some of the simpler anthologies. The work of both terms is closely integrated, and instructors are not forced to follow a rigid syllabus but may choose the readings from a list to which all instructors contribute titles of the books they have found most effective.

The work of the third term is an Introduction to Literature, in which emphasis is upon literary techniques, and the attempt is made to encourage the student to see the work in itself as it really is, to learn something of literary appreciation, and to discover that literature is not merely a statement of ideas, or an invitation to a pleasant experience, but a subtle and complex art with a rich reward for those who come to appreciate it.

At Mammouth, it is felt that this sense of appreciation is present in all students, and that the duty of the college is to develop it and sharpen it. This process is continued in the fourth semester through a study of literary forms. The class reading of the first two years is largely intensive reading, and is designed to produce full understanding and to emphasize the real way to read a book. All the modern techniques are integrated to increase students' abilities to read with understanding and pleasure, but

particularly those of Emmet Betts, Cleanth Brooks, and Mortimer Adler. In addition, however, to this intensive reading, students read extensively twenty books a semester from a list based on the catalogue of the Library of Congress.

Students are also encouraged to form their own libraries, and the local book stores stimulate business by offering prizes and holding competitions. Most seniors have nearly complete sets of the Modern Library, as well as complete sets of worthwhile books in the Pocket, Bantam, Penguin, Pelican, H-F-S, Rinehart and New American series. It is common practice for a junior to acquire these complete sets from graduating seniors for about ten cents on the dollar of their original cost and to sell them to freshmen at a five hundred percent mark-up.

The Literature Program of the third year is survey of English and American literature, and of the fourth year, a study of World Literature (mostly in translation, alas), a sort of Great Books course. This course is integrated with similar courses offered by the various language departments. It is recognized that these courses are wholly inadequate, and that the full Four Year Program in Literature is merely an introduction, but the college is proud of the great interest which this introduction awakens in the students. This interest is evidenced by the large numbers who register for the advanced courses in English, of which the department offers a full assortment.

Literature has become a vital part of student life at Mammouth. Recently, what the local paper called a "serious disturbance" broke out in a dormitory on the lower level of the cave. It became necessary to call the police, who finally restored order and who collected most of the rioters together with several bushels of beer and whiskey bottles. In court the next morning, the judge tried to find out what had caused the riot. "Well, judge," said one of the seniors, "we were having a Spencer party, and some smart jerks in the junior class got to saying that in the second book of the *Faerie Queene* the Palmer's relation to Sir Guyon is not so much to command as to persuade, but most of us seniors, who've had Mr. Richards' course, know that that theory's all washed up. They got pretty snotty about it, so we had to let them have it heavy." Since the cave had not been seriously damaged, the college did not wish to press charges, and the judge dismissed the case.

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Mammouth Cave College

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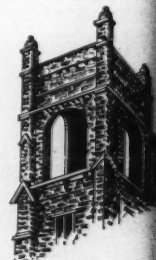
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